



ANCHOR

ACCELERATING NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH REINFORCING PARTNERSHIPS

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS: THE BEXAR HEALTHY BEVERAGE COALITION AND SUGARY DRINKS TWEET CHAT



San Antonio suffers from higher rates of obesity than the national average. Its significant Hispanic population is disproportionately affected by this epidemic, as well as other health risks such as diabetes and heart disease. A leading cause of obesity is added sugars and an increase in the consumption of sugary drinks. To help roll back the grim statistics, community health leaders in the city and county formed the Bexar Healthy Beverage Coalition in 2013 aimed at education, awareness and encouraging behavior change.

One of the early efforts for the coalition was the development of a campaign called “Is Your Drink Sugar Packed?”. The campaign aims to demonstrate the large amounts of added sugar found in popular drinks in an effort to help the public appreciate the link between over-consumption of sugar and the health effects of obesity, diabetes and heart disease, and to encourage healthier alternatives such as water. The group has a website, www.sugar-packed.com, and plans on sharing their message through community outreach and media advocacy to all of Bexar County with a focus on priority populations and underserved communities.

The Challenge

Obesity rates in San Antonio are among the highest in the country - 20th among more than 180 metro areas surveyed in the 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). About two-thirds of the city's residents - 67 percent – are overweight or obese. More than half the city's population, 59 percent, are Latino.

Sugary drinks – in the form of soda, sports drinks, sweetened milk, coffee, tea, energy drinks and even fruit drinks - are the biggest form of added sugar in American diets. The consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages has increased 500 percent in the past 50 years and is now the single largest source of calories for children, surpassing milk in the late 1990s. These added sugars and poor nutrition have contributed to obesity, diabetes, and many secondary health effects such as heart disease, amputations, kidney failure, and premature death.



“Nothing is more refreshing, better for you, or cheaper than water... H2O por vida!”

- A YoureTheCureTX Tweet

The Solution

There isn't a single cause of obesity and there won't be a single solution, but many small steps can make a difference toward building healthier lives and improving health outcomes. Community and civic leaders from San Antonio/Bexar County saw an opportunity to take action by educating the public about the large amounts of added sugar found in popular drinks, and the link between over-consumption of sugar and ill-health effects. The group realized that sharing information as simple as "one bottle of soda contains an entire day's worth of recommended sugar intake" can have an eye-opening impact on the public.

In 2013, the local health department and Metro Health were working on healthy beverages. A workgroup of key stakeholders, including the American Heart Association (AHA), was convened by Metro Health to inform message development and develop a city-wide plan to address the public's knowledge on the sugar content of some popular drinks. In fall 2014 the workgroup transitioned into a city-wide coalition, the Bexar Healthy Beverage Coalition, and their role was to build policy, systems and environmental improvements and execute the campaign goals and objectives.

In spring 2015, the AHA ANCHOR team joined forces with the Bexar Healthy Beverage Coalition to help bolster their efforts. A news conference on June 9th officially kicked off the campaign and introduced the coalition to the public. The coalition now includes the Bexar Health Collaborative, University Health Systems, San Antonio Business Group on Health, University of Texas Institute for Health Promotion, the American Heart Association, numerous area school districts, and more than 15 other organizations. The ANCHOR team worked with the coalition to develop a joint community action plan to align their actions with the ANCHOR program's goals and objectives.

Policy, System and Environmental Change

The campaign is working to create a number of system-level changes, including the adoption of healthy vending standards among the individual members of the coalition as well as other local businesses. The campaign will allow the AHA to work with other supportive organizations to "walk-the-walk" and to adopt healthy workplace guidelines in accordance with national standards.

Sustaining Success

During the next 12 months, the Bexar Healthy Beverage Coalition will roll out an educational and awareness campaign covering the Greater San Antonio market. It will integrate media advocacy, grassroots outreach, and public engagement.

Short-term goals include reaching the public with scientific-based evidence on the harmful impact of sugary drink consumption. This will be done through a multi-pronged approach: paid advertisements and free coverage in television, radio, blogs, newspapers, public service announcements and social media, as well as information spread through events and health fairs, community and neighborhood presentations, and speaking engagements in front of business and civic groups.

Long-term goals include creating a population with the knowledge and awareness to make healthier dietary decisions and an overall reduction in sugary drink consumption in San Antonio/Bexar County.



Get Involved

We encourage involvement, education, and action. Visit the campaign website at: www.sugar-packed.com to sign up for ongoing communication as well as to view educational materials and information videos.

Results

A highlight of the work so far was the [Salud America!](#) Tweet Chat in July focusing on [“How Sugary Beverage Campaigns Impact Latinos”](#). Two of the co-hosts for the national tweet chat are members of the Bexar Healthy Beverage Coalition: The Bexar Health Collaborative and the American Heart Association’s You’re the Cure Texas. Their inclusion helped to highlight the coalition’s work.

The coalition helped create a promotional invitation graphic that was shared on Twitter and Facebook. More than 7,000 individuals saw it on San Antonio’s Facebook post, with 136 people liking and sharing it. During the chat, coalition members sent tweets, many translated into Spanish, from San Antonio that were then re-tweeted from Austin, Houston and Dallas.

In the end, the topic “trended” on Twitter. Salud America!’s post-event report showed 1,200 total posts with a 4 million potential impact, based on the number of Twitter followers who could have seen the messaging, and a 200,000 potential reach, adding all users mentioning the hashtag and following each chat host.

The complete conversation can be found here: [Salud America! Tweet Chat](#).

